



Award Winning Newsletter

Isn't this glorious? We are so thrilled that GSBF gave **Aiseki Kai** along with **San Diego Bonsai Club** **first place honors** for the best newsletter, long form. Thank you contributors! Thank you **Mario Condit** of SDBC and **Uschi de Rose** of Ko Fu Kai for getting us started.



Carl Morimoto presented us with a lovely GSBF logo bonsai pot made by Jim Barrett.

The Huntington Show

We do not have a meeting in November but there is quite a bit to say since this is the last newsletter of the year! If you haven't done so yet, contact **Linda** for docent/security duty and make sure you get your display information to **Bill** before Dec 6. Time is running out!

Schedule of Events at the Huntington

Dec 23– set up day. Tables and backdrops will be set up beginning at 9AM. **Have your displays at the Huntington between 12-3.**

Dec 27– 31 show opens at 10 and closes at 4:30

Jan 1– closed for New Years

Jan 2– open 10-4:30. Take down at 4:30.

Please do not forget to sign up for security / docent duty! **Linda** is waiting to hear from you. See page 2 for the schedule. Check your calendar, select times you will be available to help and call **Linda** with the dates and times.

Bill needs to know what you plan to display so he can make the labels. Make sure you tell him the classification and place of origin for each of your stones. Limit 5. He also needs to know if you are planning a 2 piece *tokonoma* style table display. **Deadline for Bill is Dec 6th.**
714.964.6973 or hutch@aisekikai.com

Buried in a Landslide of Yugen Part 9

Yugen in Japanese art implies mysterious skills that can be felt but not put into words.
The Many Mysteries of Suiseki. Why Aiseki Kai?

Elmer Uchida – Like a rock

We first met **Elmer Uchida**, of all places, at a show where he was exhibiting some of his stones. I had seen his displays at the 1982 Nisei Week celebration and on more than one occasion at the Baiko-en Winter Silhouettes Show at the LA Arboretum. The 1983 Baiko-en show was just prior to our first meeting and I believe it was there that he learned of our plan to form a club.

He was in the crowd during the heated exchanges that launched our club that first night in 1983. Although he injected his opinions into the skirmish, when challenged, he held his ground, like a rock.

Elmer was the program in August and introduced his viewpoints on stones. He had become interested in viewing stones prior to 1960. He never made the claim but he had to be one of the first to recognize the natural beauty of desert ventifacts, stones shaped by the wind and sands. By 1983 he had already amassed a noteworthy collection from California deserts and rivers.

My fondest memory of **Elmer** is a *moment* in 1996. The National Bonsai Foundation had made a request for donations of stones to establish a North American Viewing Stone Collection to be housed in the U.S. Arboretum in Washington, D.C. Less the fifty collectors offered anything while **Elmer** offered two of his best stones. My part was to transport some of the stones to D.C. When I met with **Elmer** to get the stones I learned these were not two of his best stones, they were his two best stones. For a moment, he had tears in his eyes when he said goodbye to the stones like a parent watching as his children leave home.

Elmer passed away in December of 2004. **Jim Greaves**, who also held **Elmer** in the highest esteem, published a book with photographs of **Elmer** and many of his stones, including the two he donated to the Collection. The entire book, Elmer M. Uchida, Suiseki Sensei, is a beautiful tribute to **Elmer** but it is **Jim's** "recollection" at the close of his forward that I want to share with you.

Continued on pg 7

October Meeting Notes *by Linda Gill*

ANNOUNCEMENTS- Welcome back to **Toy Sato** and **Cliff Johnson**, founding members of Aiseki Kai.

Cliff announced that there will be a trip to China next April. It will have a similar itinerary to the trip that was previously planned. It will cost \$2699 for 18 days and there will be a translator with the trip. The weather in China should be good. For more information call American Asian Travel Inc. at 626-821-1986. Ask for **Pamela** or **Mr. Lee**. Don't delay if you are interested. Last time **Cliff** arranged the trip it was filled before he signed up!

Don Kruger thanked everyone who attended the Korean Show at the Arboretum.

Kemin Hu, who has written three books on Chinese scholar stones, will be coming to California to make a presentation to Aiseki Kai for our February meeting. So that everyone can be accommodated, the meeting will be held at 7:30 PM at the Huntington Library and Gardens. Don't miss it! [for details, see pg 7]

OCTOBER STONE OF THE MONTH - Dog shaped stone **Harry**, in keeping with the Halloween spirit, brought a green and dark red stone that looked like a mask, and a small *doha*. **Marybel** brought a figure stone of a bear from S. Africa. **Marge** had a **Harry** stone, also a *doha*. **Toy** had a sitting monkey. **Linda** brought several single peak stones because she missed the last meeting and a *monyoshi* that needs a *daiza*. **Bruce** showed his tortoise and a hare. And now for the dogs: **Barry** found a head of a Labrador shaped stone in the Yuha. **Joseph Gaytan** had a hound dog. **Don Mullally** showed a dog on a gray stone and a Snoopy in white on a reddish stone. **Joe James** had a huge stone with a black Scottie on it. **Richard Aguirre** had a mastiff.



Marybel's California bear



Toy's sitting monkey



Joe's Scottie dog



Don's Snoopy dog



Linda's crab on a shore stone



Joseph's Afghan Hound



Don's reclining dog



Bruce had this hare and..... this tortoise



Security/Docent Schedule

Our show at the Huntington is just around the corner! **Linda** is looking for folks to sign up as docents/security for our show. Naturally, anyone showing is expected to participate but all members are welcome. Please let her know **all** the times you will be available.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Other Hours</u>
Dec 27	10-1	1-4	
Dec 28	10-1	1-4	
Dec 29	10-1	1-4	
Dec 30	10-1	1-4	
Dec 31	10-1	1-4	
Jan 2	10-1	1-4	

Linda can be reached at **818.833.9883** or email her at **bigredlinda@earthlink.net**

We need you so check your calendars and select your days and times. Tell **Linda** when you can work if the listed times are not convenient.

Linda said, "Please volunteer. It's a great chance to see wonderful stones, get to know your fellow stone lovers better and maybe even learn something."



Please use this form as a reminder of the days and times for which you have volunteered.

October Program Notes *by Linda Gill*

Mr **Sudo**'s 3 talks and critique at the Viewing Stone Symposium in Pennsylvania was the topic of the October program, presented by **Nina Ragle**. **Nina** said that although Mr **Sudo** concentrated on the Keido School of Display and the use of the *tokonoma* in particular, we can learn a lot from what he said to improve our displays and deepen our appreciation of our stones.

Keido means *scenic way* and it is considered the ultimate way to view *suiseki*. The study of display is a type of training that involves practice; it is an exercise, not just knowledge of the rules. An integral part of this study involves a knowledge of the Japanese culture. Mr **Sudo** discussed bonsai, tea ceremony, art, painting, religion, philosophy and Zen. He said the arts are all interrelated and understanding them is key to a polished display. **Nina** hopes that even if we do not fully understand the Japanese culture, we can still train our eyes to attain a refined feeling in our displays.

Space is essential in creating that feeling of refinement. Space creates calm and a setting for contemplation. Space is at the heart of Keido display.

Mr **Sudo** did not talk about the stones as much as his emphasis was on the way we see them. He said that a *suiseki*'s beauty comes from the heart; it involves meditation and contemplation.

A *suiseki* display may represent the whole world and to that end, it should feel as large as possible in our mind. By giving our display space, we can create a feeling of an even bigger place, a larger world. Although we cannot change the stone, we can change the display to create a microcosm of the world.

Our life experience dictates what we see. Our displays should inspire us to think. Space invites thought and imagination.

In a *suiseki* display, the stone is always the main character. We must eliminate whatever does not enhance the stone or enhance what we are trying to say. This is at the heart of Keido display. Leave something out, don't complete the scene so that your imagination can fill in the blanks. The display should have mystery and resonance.

With respect to the use of *suiban*, Mr **Sudo** said that we can use unglazed ones and *doban* in any season. Light blue, off white and other brightly colored *suiban* are used in summer only. The colors should match the season, for example, dark green in the fall, light green in the spring. Never use white, ever.

Nina told us that Mr **Sudo** said sand is not earth or water, it is space. It should be totally flat. We should never rake the sand or slope it against the stone. The care of the sand is a reflection of us. It must be clean.

There should be no distractions such as dark specks or larger grains or bumps or dents. It should fill the *suiban* with a neat level edge.

The components of the *suiban* are not a diorama. Never partially fill a *suiban* to create a scene. Any attempt to create a specific image with the sand is viewed as doubling up on the meaning, a no-no. The best colors are cream or honey, never white. Sand is just space, it should not be noticed.

Mr **Sudo** said we must never use an incense burner as a tray as it is a religious object and that would be disrespectful. They are not made for stones. We may see pictures of stones displayed this way but that is for historical reasons. When we see a photo of a stone in what looks like either white sand or a white *suiban*, it is likely just the photo. In fact, they are off white.

No water should be in a stone that is displayed in a *daiza*. The *daiza* should not distract from the *suiseki*; it should not be noticed first. Its design should not limit what we see. It should always have feet.

Only strong stones should be placed on a *shoku* or table. The table should be flat to the edge to give a feeling of space. A lip on the edge makes the stone "sink" so save those for bonsai. Most bonsai tables are too heavy for *suiseki*. The table should not be too elaborate. It should harmonize with the stone and quiet the display to invite contemplation.

A scroll may be used to indicate the season since most stones do not do that. It should not repeat the theme and should be placed in the middle of the display without interfering with the stone.

The stone must be easy to carry in your hands. No matter its size, it is always the main object because it is always larger than any other object that may be shown with it. Therefore, never display a bonsai with a *suiseki*. The tree is just a dot compared to the scene the *suiseki* represents. It is doubling up on the meaning since the tree and the stone are creating the same world. Use moss, weeds and grasses with a *suiseki*, not a bonsai.

Never use a living thing in a *suiban*. Do not use multiple *suiseki* on a display stand. A box stand with multiple trees may display a figure stone in a *daiza*, but not a *suiseki* (*suiseki* are only natural landscape scenes, not objects). The same stone may be a *suiseki* or an object depending on the manner of display. Colored stones are best shown in the fall.

Suiseki are admired for their strength and simplicity. It must be totally natural and represent something in nature; it must have an excellent view. We must feel movement and stillness, softness and hardness.

Nina reminded us that we may not employ all these guidelines but we can keep them in mind. We can try for more space and better sand and we can try to make all our displays more refined and more elegant.

The 1 inch wide inner margins are designed for use with a 3 hole punch.



Ask Guy Jim

Dear Guy Jim,

As a novice collector I have been diligently trying to familiarize myself with common *suiseki* classifications and terminology. I have studied Yoshimura and Covello, Rivera, and Benz, but still often find myself struggling with multiple names and conflicting definitions. Is there a definitive list?

Confused and Conflicted in Orange

Dear C&C,

You are not alone! Many collectors, novice and experienced, have expressed similar feelings of inadequacy, even phobia, when faced with the varying translations and arcane terminology associated with stone appreciation. Indeed, the subject of *suibonics*, the name given to the ‘language’ of stone appreciation by connoisseurs, is often daunting. To my knowledge no complete list of terms has ever been published in the English language; however, your inquiry has prompted me to take up the challenge of such an undertaking! I will begin immediately by defining a few basic terms with the intention of adding a few more in future *Guy Jim*’s as space permits:

Suibonics: (1) a general term encompassing all the arcane terminology associated with stone appreciation (2) the art and science of selecting an appropriate *suiban* and properly placing a *suiseki* therein.

Sand: pulverized, weathered rock particles that are always the wrong color and/or grain size when found in a *suiban*.

Dai: [n. derived from the ancient phrase: “A stone to *dai* for is a stone to die for!”] a display table, often confused with a *daiza* (which is a custom carved base used to display a *suiseki*). It should be noted that a *dai* intended for the display of *suiseki* or *bonsai* is properly called a *shoku*.

Silly-seki: stones of insignificant size or quality that are difficult to discard because of cuteness, resemblance to fluffy dogs, dinosaurs, space aliens, etc. Be careful not to confuse with a *Stilly-seki*.

Stilly-seki: a stone found on the Stillaguamish River of Washington State.

Pseudo-seki: an inferior stone with pretensions of being a genuine *suiseki*. Because of its pretentiousness, **Pseudo-seki** usually has a more negative connotation than the related **Wanabe-ishi** (wan’a-be ishi) which implies an inherently sincere attempt, or **Sorta-seki**, a more self-deprecating, light-hearted acknowledgement of one’s stone’s weakness, but is a bit less damning than the dreaded **Poser-ishi**.

...more to come

Dear Guy Jim,

It seems that at conventions, on the internet, in magazines and even in our reference books, the term ‘*suiseki*’ is being applied to just about any bit of mineral matter displayed in a dish or on a stand. This is not right! Am I the only purist left?

Fuming in ‘Frisco

Dear Fuming,

I didn’t know anyone in Frisco ever got worked-up over anything so serious! However, I, too, often find myself incensed over the misapplication of the term *suiseki* to all sorts of jetsam! We live in the world of ‘anything goes’ – personal feelings and opinions are all that matter, along with the politically correct corollary that we shouldn’t be critical and inflict our values on anyone else. That said, I believe we should maintain every effort to retain our usage of the term *suiseki* for stones that remain close to our understanding of classic Japanese ideals and historical practice.

Unfortunately, we face a *fait accompli*. The term *suiseki*, in effect, has already been appropriated to cover all kinds and qualities of nominally natural stones, including worked Chinese stones, mineral specimens and crystals, which are being presented as ‘art’. We are undoubtedly stuck with the misnomer in the public arena – think of how the term ‘ice cream’ now generically refers to dozens of frozen products that often contain no cream – and in the case of the freeze-dried variety, no ice!

There is no turning this tide of misuse because *suiseki* is already established as the common search word on the Internet. *Guy Jim* himself, while selecting a name for his (future) website, americanviewingstones.org, reluctantly had to accept that using the term ‘viewing stones’ instead of incorporating *suiseki* would greatly limit ‘hits’ by prospective viewers ...

but, he is a crotchety old *Guy Jim*

The views expressed in this column are personal, perhaps irreverent, irrelevant or just plain wrong and do not reflect the consensual view of California Aiseki Kai. Send your viewing stone questions (or comments) for *Guy Jim* to jimgreaves@adelphia.net or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

BY JACK DENNIS

Dear Larry,

This letter responds to that part of your October Editorial titled “Take Heart” wherein you encouraged member input. By way of background to that end it is noted that your acknowledgement that you classify your altered stones as *biseki* seems to be a departure from your previously stated position, as I understood it, wherein you said that beauty is in the stone regardless of whether it has been cut and is therefore still a *suiseki* if it possesses all the other technical criteria. I still subscribe to that philosophy assuming that the altered stone suggests a ‘scenic vista’ either a landscape or seascape because I am unable to include altered stones adequately in the defining criteria of *biseki* or any classification or category other than the one the stone brings forth in my imagination through its emotional suggestion as a reminder of a life experience. For sure, *suiseki* are deeply rooted in culture, life-force, and Zen and are very difficult for westerners to comprehend. **Toy Sato** has cautioned us not to change the rules to fit our stones and I am not proposing to do so in my quest for enlightenment.

Moreover, I for one was not aware that Aiseki Kai exclusively used the **Murata-Naga** classification system for “Ornamental Viewing Stones” nor was I aware that this chart was an extraction from their book. I have never seen the book nor was aware of its existence so I don’t know how this book describes the stones depicted in the chart. Contrarily, for all the years that I was the editor of the newsletter I used the written text in **Covello** to characterize and to describe the stones and to categorize them accordingly and figured, maybe erroneously, everyone in the club did likewise. It has been said that the **Covello** book was the spark that created the American countrywide interest in what I have personally termed as ‘Decorative Viewing Stones’ in keeping with **Covello**’s statement that they are used as decorative objects in the tea ceremonial hut.

In preparation for a presentation last June in Iowa I made a line diagram of the viewing stone hierarchy as I understood it at the time to systematize the talk in an attempt to clarify and simplify the classification story and to be used in organizing the stones in our personal collection chronicle. Armed with this diagram and in sight of other written works on the subject I became awkwardly aware during this presentation that all of the texts have a few things in common: they are somewhat inconsistent, often ambiguous, and always incomplete. I am sure that this is true in part and in no small way because of translation problems from Japanese to

English that has complicated our collective understanding of the art. By way of an example the **Murata-Naga** characterizes a classification as *chin-seki* and defines such a stone as ‘rare’. To my knowledge and way of thinking no other textbook makes this characterization and in my interpretation all good viewing stones are rare. The Japanese dictionary defines ‘rare’ *mezurashii* as “hard to find; uncommon; phenomenal and scarce.” **John Naka** classified one of my stones as a *meisaku-ishi*. The Japanese dictionary defines *meisaku* as a magnum opus (masterpiece) and to be sure, as we all know, that masterpieces are certainly rare. Since I have not read the **Murata-Naga** book I do not know how they may have further defined a *chin-seki*. In my diagram *meisaku* is defined in part as ‘rare.’

In a discussion I had with **Nina** during the recent symposium in Pennsylvania concerning a classification that is in common use in Japan but not listed in any textbook she asked me to make a presentation to the club regarding my characterization of ‘Decorative viewing Stones.’ I agreed to make such a presentation with the understanding that my goal would be to foster an amiable discussion (as a way to determine what is right) and not to encourage argument (who is right) on this subject and to do so early in the New Year. And now armed with the Keido information presented by Mr. **Uhaku Sudo**, some of which was about as clear as a double shot of espresso, we should have a lively time of it. In reference to his description of Keido (described as a way of seeing things) - cut stones need not apply as items for contemplation in a Keido display because they are not *suiseki* but he stopped short of telling us what they are if they are not *suiseki*. Early on in my collection experience I read somewhere that *suiseki* are virtually indescribable. Now that I am much older and maybe a little wiser I am inclined to agree. Perhaps **Sudo** thinks as **Naka** did that cut stones are essentially worthless? The impression I got was that **Sudo** considers cut stones as just defiled rocks.

From my perspective the answer to many of our most perplexing questions lies buried deep in the spiritual realm of Keido. **Sudo** said if we keep after it enlightenment will come and then we can forget the rules as they will be a part of who we are. Happy trails and may peace, prosperity, and enlightenment be with you and the club in the new year.

In the January issue, Larry will discuss how Covello/Yoshimura and Murata/Naga complement each other and the definition of viewing stones and he will discuss the use of *chin-seki*.

INNOVATIONS IN STONE

by Mas Nakajima

[ed note: Mas Nakajima and Janet Roth visited with Larry & Nina earlier this year. Mas showed an interest in a particular red stone so Larry sent him home with it. The following was written by Mas and edited by Janet.]

As usual I put the stone in our yard and enjoyed looking at it, making careful observations while thinking about what to do. First of all, clearly a *suiban* display was not right. Such a colorful red jasper stone, with a round shape (even if the bottom is pretty flat), generally speaking does not work well in a *suiban*. As you know, a subdued *wabi-sabi* looking stone fits better with a *suiban*. So clearly a beautifully shaped *daiza* is the only choice. And of course, cutting the stone is a "Big No" - it would disappoint Larry so much, and make him cry! So the only choice is a natural stone with carved wood *daiza*.

After I carefully studied the stone movement and shape I made a choice to minimize the *daiza*, showing as much stone as possible, in order to enhance the stone's beauty. I enjoyed the wood carving process, and had such a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction when I was done. And at that time I almost took a picture to email to Larry showing him how I finished the stone so as to share my excitement.

But then, I brought it inside and Janet and I enjoyed it in the dining room for a few days. And after 2-3 days I wasn't feeling so happy, my confidence started disappearing. The aesthetics of the finished stone didn't appeal to me. When we looked at it from the side, it had this big belly like Akebono, the sumo wrestler from Hawaii. But the *yokozuna* can hide his belly with a beautiful apron and this poor stone was just out in the open. So I said to Janet, "Maybe I should try again, and make sure to hide the stone's tummy with the wood."

The choice I finally made, instead of re-doing the *daiza* (which may not improve it a lot), was to try finishing the stone as *suseki* art. I usually try to focus on how to finish the stone as a *suseki*. *Suseki* art is a secondary choice as it is difficult and has many complications. First of all, I have to choose just the right piece of wood with the right grain and color to complement the stone, and then the most difficult thing is painting and finishing the wood to match and enhance the feeling of the stone.

There are endless possibilities for how to finish and display each particular stone and I enjoy each stage of the process so much. The more time I spend with a difficult stone, the more excitement and joy I get. This is my way of stone appreciation.



The stone as given to Mas



The extraordinarily well made *daiza*



Front



Side view



Back

Akebono (Dawn), Natural stone (jasper, W10" x D5" x H6") and oil paint on redwood (W36" X D28" x H2").(W36" X D28" x H2").



Coming Suiseki Events

SAVE THESE DATES:

Our show at The Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, Friends Hall, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino. Dec 27-Jan 2, closed Jan 1. 10:00-4:30 each day. Free. There is a fee to go beyond and enter the gardens.

We will begin 2007 with our annual holiday potluck party on January 24. You won't want to miss that. It is always a lot of fun. Begin thinking about your donations.

Next, [drum roll] **Kemin Hu** will be the first speaker of the new year– we are so lucky to have her. **Kemin** will fly out here from Boston and present a program for us on Feb 28. This is a rare opportunity to hear a person who some scholars in her field have said is the most renowned woman connoisseur of Chinese Scholar's Stones in 400 years. Because we expect a larger than usual crowd, our February 28 meeting will be held at the Huntington in the Ahmanson classroom. More about this event and the holiday party in the January newsletter.

Refreshments

Thanks to **Howie Kawahara, Sandy & Barry Josephson, Joe James, Harry** and the **Ragles** for October's tasty pastries.

Our next "meeting" will be the January holiday party! Everyone will want to come and bring lots of potluck goodies to the January party! More about that later.



Buried in a Landslide ... Continued from pg 1

*"Elmer was beloved for his kindness and quiet manner, even as he stood fast for his principles. Years ago I had the pleasant realization that **Elmer Uchida** might be appropriately described with the same values he taught us to seek in a good suiseki: unpretentious, understated, balanced, calm, mellow, serene, reserved, composed, strong and firm, but with soft edges... Ultimately, quiet, simple elegance."*

Thank you, **Jim**.

Larry Ragle



Elmer's two favorite stones, donated to the National Collection
Above: Origin, California desert Below: Origin, Eel River



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We hope you will participate. Please send any submissions to ragle@cox.net no more than 10 days following our monthly meeting. Thank you!

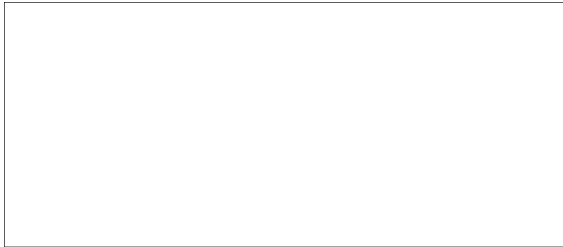
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Leaves no stone unturned

See us on the web
aiseikikai.com



Coming Events

DESCANSO BONSAI SOCIETY

We are all invited to their November 21st meeting at 7:30 in Van de Kamp Hall, Descanso Gardens, LaCanada Flintridge, to hear **Marco Invernizzi** of Italy. **Marco** will also conduct a \$25 workshop from 2-5 on the 21st in classroom B. For further information, please contact **Marcus Juniel** at 818.790.0525 or email: marcus_juniel@msn.com

BONSAI-A-THON XI

GSBF Collection at the Huntington Fundraiser, Feb 24 -25, Huntington Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino. 7:30-4:30. Repeat, it's a fundraiser. Bring donations. Early bird specials, breakfast, lunch, auctions, raffles, vendors, children and adult novice workshops. Demonstrations both days and demo material will be auctioned. Please continue to support the Southern California Bonsai and Suiseki Collection. Contact **Marge Blasingame** for information: 626.579.0420 or email: blasmrjr@aol.com

CALIFORNIA BONSAI SOCIETY

The 50th Anniversary Convention 2007, May 31- June 3, 2007 at the Crowne Plaza Anaheim Resort, 1202 Harbor Blvd., Anaheim/Garden Grove. Featured demonstrator will be **Hiroshi Takeyama**, Chairman of the Nippon Bonsai Association. For more information, call 909.473.0099

Happy Holidays

CA Aiseki Kai meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Nakaoka Community Center located at 1700 162nd St, Gardena, CA. Second floor.